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ABSTRACT

This module, which may be used as the basis for a workshop or as a special topic unit in adult basic education or English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) courses, addresses the different roles of women in the United States. Topics covered include the following: identifying problematic lifestyle differences; defining solutions to such problems; role-playing effective and ineffective ways to address problems; acknowledging role changes necessary for success; identifying conflicting pressures; questioning and weighing traditional and contemporary values; and communicating uncertainties or perspectives on problems. Basic skills addressed include communication skills, thinking skills, personal qualities, using resources, interpersonal skills, using information, and working with systems. The module contains the following: teaching points for the instructor; sample learning activities; a list of 12 resources; a sample lesson plan consisting of objectives, learners and context, room setup, materials needed, tasks to do ahead, media used, and steps for conducting the lesson; role-play materials; and pre- and postassessments. (KC)

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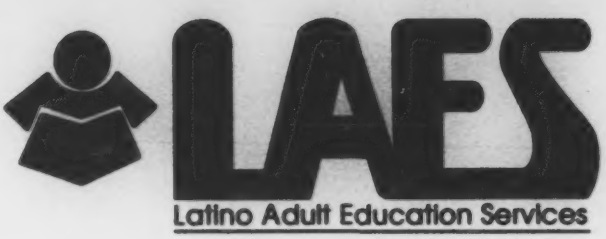

Tierra de Oportunidad

MODULE 11

Women's Changing Roles

Ed Kissam and Holda Dorsey

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MODULE 11
Women's Changing Roles

Overview

For many women, coming to California represents not only a move to a community with an unfamiliar language, novel problems (e.g. transportation in spread-out cities, shopping in large warehouse outlets), separation from supportive family members, and friends, but, also new roles, as workers, mothers, and wives. These changes in roles and their implications for day-to-day life are so fundamental and far-reaching that "fashioning a new life" becomes a major personal and intellectual challenge.

Role changes create pressures in all families and the pressures confronted by women come from within the family -- in terms of women's relationships with their husbands, children, sisters, cousins, and other extended family members. But these pressures also come from United States society which, sometimes overtly and sometimes covertly, forces new roles on women.

Migration and settlement patterns add to the pressures experienced by married women -- since usually a wife will join her husband only after a number of years of remaining in their native country as her husband migrates back and forth. Typically, a husband, wife, and children will only be reunited as the husband begins to achieve a measure of job security. This transformation of family life means changes, worries. While this traditional pattern still prevails, it is increasingly common, particularly for families from urban areas to migrate together to the United States

One of the most difficult challenges facing women from rural areas is how to combine full-time work in the formal labor market (as distinguished from work in the "informal sector" in their country) with her role as a wife and mother.

The United States social services system, in responding to the feminization of poverty, confronts women with substantial challenges due to the "feminization of bureaucracy" -- as women come to assume the primary role as providers of information required for program eligibility determinations, as custodians of a wide range of documents and official notices, and interpreters of official notifications of positive or adverse actions by human service programs, and of requests for additional information.

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Women who are on their own as heads of households with children face yet another spectrum of problems as they struggle to bear the burden of multiple full-time roles – as wage-earners, child rearers, crisis-managers in finding and paying for housing and interacting with the support systems which seek to assure their involvement in their children's education, health care, and social life.

There are no easy solutions to the problems women face but adult education programs have the potential of providing a tremendously valuable service to the extent that they can provide women with problem-solving skills, opportunities for reflection, and communication skills needed to embark on a new and broad range of personal, economic, and social interactions in "the invisible country" of United States communities,

Basic Skills Development

Basic Skills	Understanding the purposes and context of communication with a range of bureaucracies, understanding the value of communicating questions, uncertainties, personal perspectives on problems, skills in defusing confrontational situations.
Thinking Skills	Experience in identifying conflicting pressures, comparing and contrasting divergent sources of information, questioning and weighing of both traditional and contemporary values. Forging novel solutions to intensely personal dilemmas.
Personal Qualities	Working hard to attain goals, getting along with people, chooses the moral thing to do, building on personal beliefs to accommodate changes of attitudes.
Uses Resources	Evaluating the quality of information provided by diverse sources of information and the concept of comparing alternative interpretations of novel situations. Interpretation of information from mass media, print, specialized hotlines, as well as "outreach" services, "information and referral providers", and other community institutions.
Interpersonal Skills	Works well with people of various backgrounds, teaches others new skills and new information.

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Uses Information	Acquires, evaluates and uses information, interprets and communicates information to others.
Works With Systems	Analyzes organizational systems in order to function within the system, i.e., school, heath clinic, work.

Teaching Points

1. **Social life in the United States inevitably changes women's roles.** Women's lives, and the lives of their husbands and children, cannot go in isolation from the social context they live in. Personal values about "traditional" or "non-traditional" ways of living have to be examined, in the context of the pressure of United States life, ideally by spouses addressing issues jointly as they come up and weighing pros, cons, and implications of each family decision. Key decisions such as where to live, working at one job or another, and the desirability of sharing housing should be explored fully.

2. **Almost no families in the United States can survive without both husband and wife working,** without making new arrangements for child care and how the household is organized. There is no "right way" -- just ways that are right for one individual family or another. Gender roles and mores in the United States are different than in other countries and will inevitably affect families' lives. Such changes cannot be avoided, but they can be managed.

3. **Tensions within the family are the inevitable results of learning to function in a new environment**. They are neither "good" nor "bad". What can be "bad" or "good" is how families confront these new challenges. In most cases, families will have to "experiment" with how best to resolve the conflicts they face -- e.g. women's need for independence as part of new work roles, bureaucracies' tendency to deal directly with women and ignore their husbands, children's exploration of new United States behavior and mores which decrease parents' authority.

4. **Tensions between wives and their husbands are the inevitable result of changed rules of the game for social and economic life as well as families reuniting after long periods of separation**. Family tensions and conflicts are probably inevitable among reuniting families. The best a husband and wife can expect is to be able to resolve those conflicts in a loving, mutually supportive, and creative way. Economic pressures, fears about change, children's performance in school, a constant stream of unexpected problems, bad treatment by employers, the police, storekeepers, all create stress for both husband and wife. The only defense against these pressures is to expect them and prepare for them.

5. **Children are agile learners of new modes of behavior but, nonetheless, need constant support from their parents' in understanding and adapting to a new society and educational system.** Children in immigrant families will be able to assimilate tremendous amounts of new information, adapt rapidly in many regards to their new environment, and embark rapidly on learning a new language. This rapid, surface-level adaptation may, in many cases, belie these same children's need to have their parents help them understand and respond to the new social demands they face. Parents should seek to overcome the social pressures which tend to isolate their children from them.

6. **Life in the United States makes it difficult to rely on informal networks for support in addressing personal problems.** The informal networks which provide women and men advice and consultation with personal dilemmas, information about new and unfamiliar issues, and personal support and encouragement in traditional peasant societies are weak in the United States -- partly due to people's mobility and living in physically dispersed locations, partly due to the fact that more and more of our social interactions have become formalized.

7. **In the United States many family support services which were provided in other countries by informal networks of family, friends, and neighbors are provided by formalized institutions**. Women who do not live in areas near relatives or acquaintances from their home villages are cut off from the support networks which helped them in problem-solving and overcoming adversity. There are now, however, a variety of formal structures -- health clinics, schools, legal services, child care providers, mutual support groups in many parts of California that can provide valuable support to families and to women who bear the brunt of much of the isolation. These networks will never be able to achieve the level of intimacy and individualized support which extended family networks provide but it will still be necessary and useful to rely on them. At the same time, persons needing help will have to recognize their limitations.

8. **Personal, economic, and social adversity needs to be the basis for triggering mutual support as opposed to individual conflict**. Most women's experiences include a measure of injustices and instances of unfair, hostile, or indifferent treatment. It is important to avoid the common reaction of displacing the pain of these negative experiences into the home. Women should be prepared to expect and understand a measure of unwarranted hostility, and to acknowledge and support family members as each encounters their own difficulties.

9. **Women on their own can seek support from informal mutual assistance networks**. Women on their own--as heads of households or simply as single women working in the United States may well be the most isolated group among the population. In some cities of California, advocacy groups are now forming which are able to provide help to women s in facing the special

problems they face. Women's mutual support groups provide particularly valuable assistance in finding access to many official services.

Sample Learning Activities

1. Discuss women's experience of the change of living in the United States During their first month in the United States what most surprised women about the United States? What aspects of life in the United States continue to seem most strange, unusual or different? Have participants write a letter home to a sister or female relative telling them "what it's like".

2. Discuss the pros and cons of women and children remaining in the native country while their husbands go to the United States to work in contrast to immediately joining their husbands in the United States Explore whether differences of perspective relate to women's different villages or different family networks. If so, how?

3. Ask class members, men and women to prepare "daily schedules" on how they spend their time. Make pie chart graphs on the blackboard. Review the graph to analyze different individual patterns and discuss the differences between men's schedules of activities and women's.

4. Discuss the pros and cons of women working, remaining at home to take care of children, or combining both roles. Emphasize the appropriateness of different individual opinions and perspectives. Have class participants prepare a list of five examples of advice they would give other women about combining work and family life.

5. Have students list the five greatest surprises they had in discovering what life in the United States was like. Other options are: 1) list the five best things about life in the United States, 2) the five worst things, 3) the five most serious problems facing families. Discuss strategies for overcoming these problems.

6. Role play effective and ineffective approaches to dealing with family conflict scenarios -- e.g. children not being fed because both parents are working, a woman considering a better-paid job on the night shift, a husband having to give a wife a ride to work at 5 in the morning.

7. Role play effective and ineffective scenarios about helping children with their problems with school -- e.g. dealing with racial or ethnic insults, trying to help with homework when parents do not know English, meeting with a teacher who says a child is doing poorly in school, participating in after-school sports activities when parents do not have a car and public transportation may be dangerous.

8. Discuss whether a husband or wife should tell their spouse if they are insulted at work and, if so, how a spouse can best provide support in dealing with unfair treatment at work?

9. Discuss the pros and cons of saving money for a woman to have her own car to look for and commute to a better job than the one she has now.

10. Develop a generic family budget in pie graph form including categories for housing costs, the costs of working (including transportation and child care), food, health care, saving for emergencies, debt repayment. Why might budgets differ? What trade-off might there be between transportation costs for going to work and getting a better job?

11. Working with a family budget which includes items such as shelter, food, clothing, entertainment, transportation, health care, discuss which budget items are fixed costs for all families and which vary.

12. Discuss what the most common problems class participants see in sharing housing with family or friends and what are the best strategies for minimizing conflict.

Resources

The list of materials relevant to women's legal issues is too extensive to include here. Important resources in California are:

- In Northern California, **Mujeres Unidas y Activas**, Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Services, **(415) 243-8215** is an effective grass-roots women's group addressing a wide range of women's issues.

- In Southern California, **CHIRLA** maintains a Materials Clearing House and a Speakers' Bureau which can be reached at **(213) 736-1300** Extension 631.

- **CHIRLA** also has a Sub-Committee focusing on Issues relating to Domestic Workers. The contact person is: Nancy Cervantes who can be reached **at (213) 385-2977**.

- An excellent book on the issues faced by some women is provided in Chris Hoagland and Karen Rosen, editors. **Dreams Lost, Dreams Found: Undocumented Women in the Land of Opportunity**, CIRRS, 1991, $20. This 150 page report is a valuable resource providing teachers an in-depth look at the issues faced by undocumented women.

ESL Commercial Textbooks

- Consider the Issues, Longman
  Unit 7, What's Happening to the American Family?
  Unit 8, Women Caught in the Middle of Two Generations
  Book and Audiotape

- Decision Dramas, JAG Publications
  Unit 10, Divorce or Stay Married?
  Unit 12, Date an American or Not?
  Unit 13, Who Will Take Care of the Baby?

- ESL for Action, Addison-Wesley
  Unit 7, Moving Toward Equality

- Face the Issues, Longman
  Unit 2, Living Through Divorce
  Unit 4, Where the Girls and Boys Are
  Unit 8, From One World to Another

- Faces: Exchanging Views in English, Lateral Communications
  Unit 14, Men and Women

- Faces of the USA, Longman
  Chapter 1, The American People: Men and Women

- Heartworks, Inspirations for English as a Second Language, Prentice Hall Regents
  Unit 10, Are Men and Women Really Equal?

- Talk It Over, Longman
  Boys' Work or Girls' Work?

11. WOMEN'S CHANGING ROLES

OBJECTIVES

- identify problematic lifestyle differences
- define solutions to such problems
- role play effective and ineffective ways to address the problems
- acknowledge role changes necessary for success

LEARNERS & CONTEXT

Adult students. Average ability of the group is medium. The range of ability is wide. Motivation is high. Group size is between 11 and 30. There are many learners whose English is limited.

ROOM SETUP

Small tables and chairs to allow for team work

TO BRING

Sticky colored-dots

MEDIA USED

overhead, sticky dots, paper/pencil

STEPS

Warm up
Introduction
Brainstorm
Selection
Discussion
Solutions
Reports
Break
Define situation
Discuss ways
Prepare role play
Acting
Reflection
Application
Planning
Closure

Lesson Plan: Women's Changing Roles

	Warm up	Teacher can tell a story, from personal experience, to make the lesson concrete and personal.
(8 min)	*Motivation* *• Use Anecdote*	For example, tell the students about coming to this country, or to California, or entering into a marriage, or going away to college, and the lifestyle differences that created some problems for you, and what you did to adjust.
	Introduction	Teacher with the use of a transparency states the objectives of the lesson.
(7 min)	*Information Preview* *• State Objectives Formally*	You will be able to: • identify problematic lifestyle differences • define solutions to such problems • role play effective and ineffective ways to address the problems • acknowledge role changes necessary for success
	overhead	You will also practice: * identifying conflicting pressures * questioning and weighing traditional and contemporary values * communicating uncertainties or perspectives on problems
	Brainstorm	Teacher asks students to brainstorm what they see as lifestyle differences that cause problems for Latino women in the US.
(10 min)	*Practice & Feedback* *• Brainstorming*	Students generate ideas quickly without stopping to judge their worth. Teacher writes ideas on the blackboard.
	Selection	Students and teacher clarify meaning of brainstorm ideas.
(10 min)	*Information Acquisition* *• Problem Definition*	Teacher gives each student five sticky colored-dots.
	sticky dots	Students are to paste their sticky dots on the ideas that are most important to them. When students finish "spending" their dots, teacher and students count to select the 5 or 6 most important problems to be studied.

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Lesson Plan: Women's Changing Roles

	Discussion	Teacher asks students to form 5 or 6 groups, according to the number of problems selected. Each group will select a problem.
(10 min)	*Information Acquisition* *• Discussion*	Students will discuss and examine the causes of the problem. Teacher will walk around, monitor and encourage participation by all.
	Solutions	Students identify a variety of possible solutions and analyze their consequences in order to make informed choices.
(10 min)	*Practice & Feedback* *• Group Feedback*	
	Report back	Students report back stating: the problem analyzed the causes examined the possible solutions found and the consequences of each solution the groups' chosen solution
(15 min)	*Practice & Feedback* *• Peer Feedback*	Students will also respond to questions from the class.
	Break	Students may take a few minutes to stretch, walk around, change places. Teacher completes attendance records and other paperwork.
(10 min)	*Other* *• Break*	
	Define situation	Teacher asks students to sit in groups of three, representing mother, father, child.
(5 min)	*Motivation* *• Establish Future Relevance*	Teacher reviews the problems from the brainstorm session, and asks groups to select a situation relevant to themselves.

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Lesson Plan: Women's Changing Roles

	Discuss ways *(10 min)* *Information Acquisition* • *Discussion*	The groups analyze the selected situation and discuss effective and ineffective ways to address it. Teacher walks around monitoring and assisting as necessary.
	Prepare role play *(15 min)* *Practice & Feedback* • *Role Play* *paper/pencil*	Teacher asks students to prepare a role play simulating "the family" interacting effectively or ineffectively to address the situation. Teacher assists students as needed with specific vocabulary, or expressions.
	Acting *(15 min)* *Practice & Feedback* • *Creative Practice*	Student groups perform their role play and respond to questions and comments from the class.
	Reflection *(15 min)* *Closure* • *Reflection*	Teacher asks students to reflect on what they learned and experienced. Teacher asks students to focus on their feelings toward the group: Was it supportive? Was it easier to think as a group or as an individual? Can the group become a support network for other situations? Students might want to share their reflections with the class.
	Application *(10 min)* *Motivation* • *Use Anecdote*	Teacher ask students to think back to when they first arrived in the United States, in California, in the school, and list what they found so different that they could not accept it.

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Lesson Plan: Women's Changing Roles

Planning

(10 min) *Closure*
- *Student Self-Test*

Teacher asks students to write a statement about what adjustment they made or plan to make to overcome what they found so different that they could not accept it.

Closure

(8 min) *Closure*
- *Instructor Summary*

Teacher with the use of a transparency reviews the objectives of the lesson.
You are able to:
- identify problematic lifestyle differences
- define solutions to such problems
- role play effective and ineffective ways to address the problems
- acknowledge role changes necessary for success

You also practiced:
- identifying conflicting pressures
- questioning and weighing traditional and contemporary values
- communicating uncertainties or perspectives on problems

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Women's Changing Roles

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- identify problematic lifestyle differences
- define solutions to such problems
- role play effective and ineffective ways to address problems
- acknowledge role changes necessary for success

Students will also practice:

* identifying conflicting pressures
* questioning and weighing traditional and contemporary values
* communicating uncertainties or perspectives on problems

Both husband and wife work. Wife makes more money.

Woman tells her teenage daughter not to do something. Daughter responds: "Customs are not the same in this country."

Woman has opportunity for a better paid position working the night shift.

Woman is tired after working eight hours at the factory, and at home cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, for the family.

Woman wants to go out with two other women workers after their shift.

Woman has a good paying job. Her new supervisor is a young man.

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Date: _____

Student Name _____

Teacher Name _____

Student Survey
"Women's Changing Roles"

1. **Have you ever thought or talked with friends, family or co-workers about the following issues:**

	For Each Line, Please check the box that applies to you			
	Never	Once or Twice	Often	Not Interested
a. that in the U.S. women often have to work full-time to make sure the family has enough money?				
b. the different ways families have to change in order to adapt to life in the U.S.?				
c. that some women don't always have close family members to rely on for help with needs or problems?				
d. that some conflicts or experiences will cause people to be upset or tense?				
e. that it is common for family members - husbands and wives, children and parents - to take their personal problems out on each other?				
f. the different types of pressures on individuals and families and the conflicts they stir up?				

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2. **How important is it to find ways of approaching the following situations or issues either to help your friends or your family with:**

	For Each Line, Please check the box that applies to you				
	Not Very Important	**A Little Important**	**Very Important**	**Not Interested**	**Not Applicable**
a. Children's problems at school and in the neighborhood?					
b. Tension or conflict between husbands and wives or between parents and children that is really caused by outside stress?					
c. Dealing with the changes life in the U.S. brings about in family life?					

3. **Please read the background and advise Laura on how she should talk to her daughter, Aura.**

Background: A husband and wife immigrated to the United States 16 years ago. They speak limited English. Their 3 children were born in the United States. Although the children understand and can speak Spanish, they are only willing to speak English. The parents want Spanish to be spoken at home. Aura, aged 14, has come home and wants to go out to the Mall with her friends. She tells her Mom—"Come on, Mom, all my friends are going. I need to fit in. They'll think I'm dumb if I don't go. I promise I'll help with dinner tomorrow night". Her mother wants her to spend some time with the family and stay to do her homework - she doesn't want her to go to the Mall. She knows Aura's Dad definitely will be displeased if she lets her go to the Mall. Please advise Laura on what she should say to her daughter:

a. What can she tell her daughter about why she shouldn't go to the Mall?

_____

_____

_____

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b. What stresses is Aura feeling? And how can her mom help her with these?

_____

_____

c. What stresses is Laura feeling; and what can Laura do to reduce this stress?

_____

_____

4. How important is it for you to learn more about:

	For Each Line, Please check the box that applies to you			
	Not Very Important	**A Little Important**	**Quite Important**	**Have All the Information I need**
a. how to decrease tension in families and communicate more effectively about it?				
b. how to discuss conflicting pressures in families, and develop new solutions to personal or family dilemmas?				
c. where people can go to get different kinds of help for personal or family problems?				
d. groups set up by women to help each other with the special problems they face?				
e. ways to communicate with your children and spouse in times of stress or conflict?				
f. how to interpret information (from television, radio, newspapers, flyers, brochures) to find the best place to get help or refer somebody else to it?				

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5. **What issues should the class focus on to better prepare people to deal with how women's lives are changing and what this means for individuals and families?**

I want to learn about:

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Date: _____

Student Name _____

Teacher Name _____

Module 11:
Women's Changing Roles
Post Assessment

Instructions: ***This assignment is in two parts. The first part asks you to advise us how to respond to one of the situations described. The second part asks you to tell us what you learned from your work on this module.***

Part I. On the attached page are situations which some families confront. Divide into groups of 4 adults. Each group should select one of the situations described on the attached page to work through.

Your group task is to imagine who would be participants in the situation (for example, husband, wife, child, teacher, friend, neighbor, relative), and discuss what each participant says and does.

The product of your group work should be a "role play" which shows how to deal with the situation or problem. You each must play a part, and include as much as possible of what you learned from the work your class has done on this or relevant subjects. The key points you each want to communicate should be written down on the worksheet page which follows, and handed in as documentation of the solution you propose.

While we cannot always choose what problem we have to confront, we can choose the way that we respond to them.

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Work Sheet for Module 11 Part I -- Please turn this in to your teacher

1. **Which of the situations on the attached pages is your group focusing your skit on?**

   Circle 1:
   a. A family with 16 year old daughter
   b. A teacher asks to meet with parents
   c. Two families share an apartment
   d. A mother pays a comadre to take care of her child
   e. The mother of a Mexican immigrant comes to live with her son and his wife
   f. A husband and wife immigrated to the United States 16 years ago
   g. Parents are sure their teenage son is involved in a gang
   h. A housewife almost never leaves her house except to go to the grocery store

2. **Who is involved in the situation (for example, husband, wife, child, teacher, friend, neighbor, relative, employer, co-worker),**

   _____

3. **What is the key problem from each person's view? What does each participant say and do?**

Person	What they think the key problem is	What do they do? & What do they say?

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Part II. Please tell us what you have learned from the work

4. **What have you learned from the work your class did that is helpful to you or may help you in the future to solve the problem you focused on:**

- giving advice to women you know--friends, family--or for you, yourself, in dealing with change:
- about strategies for dealing with them:
- about something else you or your class discussed as part of the work with this module:

5. **Did your work in this module help you in any of the following areas?**

	Yes/No	Please comment on either: • How you benefited; or • Why you feel this module was not useful for you in this area
a. Reading and understanding information presented to you in written form?		
b? Researching how to get information you need?		
c. Asking questions and getting the information you need to know?		
d. Speaking with family members or those outside your family, and communicating your ideas persuasively?		
e. Writing notes or letters to communicate your opinions or feelings on an issue.		
f. Anything else? Please tell us:		

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Module 11: Select One of These Situations for your Teamwork

Situation A: A family's is living in the United States. Their 16 year old teenage daughter wants to go out on dates with her boyfriend. The parents don't want her to go because such behavior is not acceptable in their village in Mexico.
Situation B: A teacher asks to meet with parents to discuss problems their child is having at school. The mother doesn't speak much English but her husband does. Both work.
Situation C: Two families share an apartment. The two women are not getting along. One feels she cleans, cooks and does more household chores than the other. The men don't want to get involved.
Situation D: A mother pays a comadre to take care of her child during the day while she works. The mother is not happy with the way her child is being taken care of but she is afraid to discuss her feelings with her comadre.
Situation E: The mother of a Mexican immigrant comes to live with her son and his wife. The mother is very critical of the wife. She doesn't think her son should share housework and care of the children with her daughter-in-law even if they both have jobs. The wife complains to her husband about his mother but he doesn't want to say anything to her.
Situation F: A husband and wife immigrated to the United States 16 years ago. They speak limited English. Their 3 children were born in the United States. Although they understand and can speak Spanish, they only will speak English. The parents want Spanish to be spoken at home.
Situation G: Parents are sure their teenage son is involved in a gang. They don't know what to do or who to talk to. He suddenly has different friends, wears different clothes, comes home very late and has trouble getting up in the morning.
Situation H: A housewife almost never leaves her house except to go to the grocery store. Her husband goes out regularly with his friends. He plays on a soccer team 3 times a week and sometimes goes other places with his friends leaving her home alone with the children. They almost never do anything together as a family.

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